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U.S. Capitol's Master Plan: The Missing Link

Patrick Pinnell

Pennsylvania Avenue is used as a street, but every four years in January we are reminded it was *invented* to be a symbol. Washington, Jefferson, and Pierre Charles L'Entant intended Washington, D.C. to be a three-dimensional version of the recently enacted Constitution: they placed buildings, streets, and squares in specific relationships as visible symbols of the ideal working of Good Government.

Recently the architect of the Capitol, George M. White, sent to Congress a proposed *Master Plan for the United States Capitol*. If Congress gives it legal recognition, the Plan will guide the Federal occupation of Capitol Hill for the next half-century. Five years in preparation, with a team of private consultants advising on everything from history to parking, this Capitol Plan is the direct if partial successor to L'Entant's original design for the entire city as well as to the 1901 McMillan Commission Plan. The 243 acres of Capitol Hill are no longer, in a statistical sense, the heart of Washington's planning problems. Washington's center of gravity has moved northwest towards the White House and downtown. Only 22,000 of the central city's more than 300,000 jobs are on the Hill. Nevertheless, it is one of the great centers of power, and the Capitol building itself is still a recognized and potent symbol of the United States of America. The Hill's utilitarian planning problems seem small when contrasted with the importance and difficulties posed by the symbolic significance of the area.

Modern architecture's proponents have often emphasized efficiency and been largely blind to symbols. However, the remedy is not necessarily to reverse the bias. The new *Master Plan for the United States Capitol* is clearly concerned with the day-to-day operations of Legislature and Judiciary and with the representation of the Ideal of Government as it is supposed to be in this country.

In terms of the architectural forms and spaces proposed by architects Mitchell Giurgola and planners Wallace, Roberts and Todd, the White Plan is deceptively simple. For future space needs, the Plan gives the Senate two new buildings making a new Senate Square northeast of the Capitol (see 3, 4 on the Plan). Similarly, the House of Representatives will expand its office and conference space as needed into new buildings forming a House Square (20) directly south of the Dome, in fact, framing a vista

of it. The existing traditional separation of the two houses north and south of East Capitol Street remains. Noteworthy, too, is the Plan's recognition of an ecological limit to the number of people and bulk of buildings the Hill can sustain; thereafter, new functions will be dispersed elsewhere.

The Capitol itself is barely touched. The West Front, the only facade remaining from the original building, will be renovated and preserved. Current high-perk parking lots to the east vanish and the giant underground garage sometimes contemplated in past Capitol studies is not proposed here. In the course of rationalizing service access, a small amount of underground office space and 500 underground parking spaces (9 on Plan) will be added.

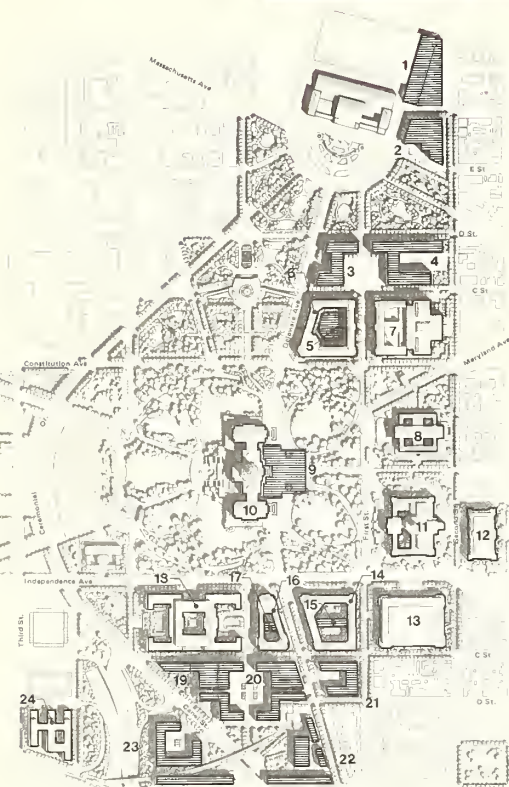
Beyond Senate Square to the north (3), a new building to house the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (2) will help define Union Station Plaza; southward beyond House Square more House offices as needed (22) will eventually make a larger, less regular square, with Canal Street slicing in and across from the northwest, the railroad line from Union Station emerging from its tunnel under the Hill to slice through on the opposite diagonal, and a tongue of greenery slipping south on the Capitol axis, out from the square and under the southeast freeway.

To the east, the White Plan proposes to use the fact that most front yards on Second Street (between 11 & 12) are legally "public parkland" to support a program of tree-planting and wall-building to help regularize the street space.

The only big surprise in the Plan involves the Supreme Court. In the "mid-range future" it is intended that the Court (8) take over the private offices immediately north of it. But for the long-range—perhaps thirty years or so—the Plan recommends moving the Court out of its present Temple of Justice and off the Hill altogether, to a new Court district somewhere in the city.

The possible new Supreme Court is the only potentially noteworthy new building proposed, even implicitly, by the Plan; the various new House and Senate structures are intended to be functional but undistinguished "background" buildings. That fact is really the key to this Plan. The buildings themselves are not its essence; instead, its series of public squares are primary. To put it another way, it is not the *interior* rooms which determine the proposed building shapes, but the *exterior* spaces, the regular courtyards, squares, and street-corridors

CONTINUED ON PAGE TWO



- 1 Square 720, future parking garage
- 2 Square 721, 460,000 g.s.f. * future office building
- 3 Square 684, 460,000 g.s.f. future Senate office building
- 4 Square 724, 780,000 g.s.f. future Senate office building
- 5 Russell Senate Office Building, future courtyard development, 40,000 - 90,000 g.s.f.
- 6 Russell Senate Office Building, 598,000 g.s.f.
- 7 Hart and Dirksen Senate Office Buildings, 1,380,000 g.s.f.
- 8 Supreme Court, 392,000 g.s.f.
- 9 East Plaza Underground, future parking plus 80,000 g.s.f. of support space
- 10 United States Capitol, 758,000 g.s.f.
- 11 Library of Congress, Jefferson Building, 724,000 g.s.f.
- 12 Library of Congress, Adams Building, 666,000 g.s.f.
- 13 Library of Congress, Madison Building, 1,976,000 g.s.f.

- 14 Cannon House Office Building, 593,000 g.s.f.
- 15 Cannon House Office Building future courtyard development, 100,000 g.s.f.
- 16 Longworth House Office Building, 565,000 g.s.f.
- 17 Longworth House Office Building future courtyard development, 70,000 g.s.f.
- 18 Rayburn House Office Building, 1,162,000 g.s.f.
- 19 Squares 635 south, 637, 639, 641,000 g.s.f. future House office buildings
- 20 Squares 691 and 693 north, 596,000 g.s.f. future House office buildings
- 21 Square 692, 274,000 g.s.f. future House office building
- 22 Square 693 south, 510,000 g.s.f. future House office buildings
- 23 Square 640, 609,000 g.s.f. Office
- 24 House Office Building Annex No. 2 532,000 g.s.f.

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Environmental Design Research: Concepts, Methods and Values; Marguerite Villecco and Michael Brill. Free from the Design Arts Program, National Endowment for the Arts, 2401 E Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20506

New Yorkers Praise Washington ... But Prefer to Live in New York

Robin Lynn

New Yorkers are opinionated—and never more passionate than when they compare their city to another. A group of New York's architects, critics, preservationists and designers looked at the quality of the built environment in Washington, D.C. and contrasted it with New York.

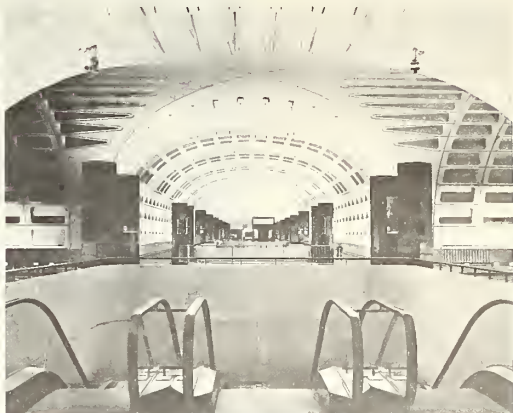
A New Yorker's visual image of Washington is not, as one might suspect, the obvious difference in building height. Instead, the most striking contrast is the abundance of open space and greenery. "The amount of trees, shrubbery, and lawns is exactly reversed in the two cities," comments James Marston Fitch, Director of Historic Preservation for Beyer, Blinder, Belle. The effect of this open space is not lost upon New Yorkers. Martin Moskoff, graphic designer and member of *Metropolis*' Editorial Board, enjoys the "luxurianness of space between places." He appreciates having sufficient area around buildings, such as the East Wing of the National Gallery of Art, to view them from different angles and great distances. It is an uncommon experience for a New Yorker to have a grand vista at ground level rather than from skyscrapers.

Since they are accustomed to living about tall buildings, New Yorkers view height restrictions with skepticism. "What I don't like is the uniformity of building in downtown Washington. There is only one sense of the block," says Michael Altschuler, visiting professor of architecture at Yale University. "Because New York has been built higher-skinner, the skyline varies. There are four-story buildings, twenty-story buildings, church spires. The eye goes up and down." New York Times architecture critic Paul Goldberger finds height restrictions appropriate to Washington because "it was created at the beginning as a city of boulevards, like Paris, and that kind of city is appropriate for low-rise buildings." However, he finds its architecture "dull."

This deficit was cited again and again. Some of those interviewed felt that the new National Building Museum should be located in New York rather than Washington. Paul Goldberger agrees. "A National Building Museum in the nation's capital is, of course, justifiable, but New York or Chicago would be more appropriate as they have played a greater role in the history of architecture."

It is at street level that New Yorkers reserve their greatest praise for their own city. They enjoy the pace of life on New York streets and the concentration and variety of its inhabitants. They are regenerated by walking among crowds, shopping at odd hours, and observing and being seen out on the avenues. Washington's streets cannot compare.

New Yorkers know Washington's premiere streets as ceremonial boulevards less



Washington's famous Metro is not only rapid but also spectacularly housed. Station design, architects: Harry Weese and Associates; engineers: DeLuw, Cather and Associates.

appropriate for strolling and window-shopping than for parades and inaugurations. Pennsylvania Avenue, although designed as a grand boulevard, presently has unattractive commercial stores on its northern side and uniform Federal buildings opposite them. New Yorkers consider it an awkward streetscape neither majestic nor practical. Few New Yorkers knew that the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation plans to complete the street's northern border. One who did, James Marston Fitch, had confidence that the results would restore a grand avenue which has been visually incomplete since Lincoln's day.

New Yorkers felt there were no comparable boulevards in their own city. "In the boroughs, Ocean Parkway and the Grand Concourse are conceived as grand," says Goldberger, "but they have declined. You can't compare New York's and Washington's avenues. Avenues in Manhattan are dense, tight, woven grids." Adele Chatfield-Taylor, Executive Director of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Foundation, agrees: "None of the avenues in New York were meant to be seen as grand." Still, one person felt that Park Avenue looking south from the 90's toward Grand Central Station was impressive because of its width, topography, and canyon-like quality, and another suggested Broadway above Columbus Circle was grand. No one nominated Fifth Avenue.

There was general dismay that neither city provides much access to its waterfront. However, New Yorkers could not refrain their praise for Washington's Metro. Although some came to the defense of New York's system by pointing out that its subway carries countless more people more places twenty-four hours a day, everyone admired the Washington system. "It's the way the subway should be," exuded G. E. Kidder-Smith, architectural photographer and author of the three-volume *Architecture of the United States*. The stations are attractive and the trains are peaceful. In spite of praise, New Yorkers seem to like what Washington is not. They prefer New York's fast pace, its density, and above all, its diversity. Washington is considered one-dimensional because its major industry—the United States Government—dominates the mood and commerce of the city. Richard Oliver, former Curator of Architecture at the Cooper Hewitt Museum and presently Curator of the Centennial Exhibition at Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture and Planning, expresses these differences symbolically and physically. "New York is and has always been a *laissez-faire* city. Its diverse, irregular skyline reflects this lack of a controlling force. The height restriction in Washington expresses the power to order—an appropriate expression for the Nation's capital."

Capitol Plan

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

North and south of the Capitol. Clearly, the White Plan has been influenced by two decades of critical attacks on modern architecture. Lamentably, much of this architectural debate has focused on ornament; it is encouraging that this Plan recognizes more fundamental issues; the Plan rediscovers the historically demonstrated axiom that well-defined outdoor public spaces are as necessary as good buildings to the proper functioning and individuality of cities.

L'Enfant intended an arcaded, urbane National Square for the Capitol's East Front to contrast with the West Front's grand vista across what is now the Mall. For a number of reasons the National Square never came about. The White Plan resurrects it in concept, if not in location. Like L'Enfant's square, the proposed House and Senate squares would have arcades with a mixture of shops and offices behind. Potentially, this mixture would stimulate the diverse activities characteristic of city situations. The new squares are middle-sized: as such, they would provide the missing steppingstone in a sequence which moves from small to large spaces, enabling eye and mind to interrelate the entire Capitol/City experience.

By now we are used to the preservation of historic buildings and even neighborhoods; but the idea of preserving and restoring historic plans is a new one. That certainly is one way of understanding this new Plan, which seems designed expressly to revive the ideas, if not always the literal forms, of the L'Enfant Plan.

Let's compare present-day Washington with the City as it was conceived by L'Enfant. Beyond the changes, additions and losses of streets, or the enormous increase in size, a single more fundamental difference stands out, and that has to do with zoning. The most drastic divergence of built Washington from intended Washington is in ghettoization of function; the activities of life are widely separated, with Working and Shopping here, Living there, and Governing somewhere else. The concentration of a single function evident in, say, the Federal Triangle, would have been inconceivable in the 1790's—and the question to ask is whether that kind of concentration is either functionally or symbolically appropriate today.

L'Enfant dispersed the monumental structures of Government through the body of his city, for reasons of symbolism as much as convenience. Each important building was to have had its distinct of background

squares, streets, and buildings, logic being that people could live and work conveniently nearby. Symbolically, too, with the dispersal of Federal buildings around the Plan, the Government was not zoned away from the People.

In 1973 there were about 18,000 jobs in the area covered by the Capitol Hill Plan. In the same year roughly a thousand people lived there. The new Master Plan includes no housing. Yet this radical separation of workers from work, with the consequent necessity of expending energy to move people back and forth, is a disappointing feature of the Plan. It is puzzling that a plan so conscientious and foresighted, not bound by the received ideas of the last fifty years, and yet sensitive to the ideas of its distinguished ancestor, would fail to recognize the full possibilities of the situation. The restoration of L'Enfant's symbolic intent—to represent the interdependence, the identity, in fact, of Government and Citizens—could have been part of the proposed solution.

I hope Congress will recognize the high quality of the proposed Master Plan and give it standing as more than a collection of suggestions, to be followed or disregarded as the vagaries of the next fifty years dictate. It is an impressive document.

Georgetown Overdeveloped- Downtown D.C. Ignored

David M. Schwarz
Paul G. Jackman

In September Mayor Marion Barry's agent, under the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Act, gave approval to the development of a one million gross square foot mixed use project intended to sit alongside the Potomac at the foot of Historic Georgetown. After a lengthy review process established to protect D.C. Historic Districts from unsuitable development, this decision seems to be final. Nevertheless, opponents of the project do not accept the decision. They have initiated litigation to stop the project's construction since they view it as an indefensible intrusion into Georgetown's historic context.

The final outcome of their appeals to the court and whether or not the project is ever built depend on a variety of legal and economic issues yet to be decided. What is clear is the record. Throughout the decade-long fight for Georgetown's welfare waged by a variety of fragmented interests, public and private, one thing has been conspicuously absent: a coherent urban perspective capable of tying the issue of Georgetown preservation and development into the question of appropriate planning and development for the entire capital city.

Over the past decade debate has concentrated on assessing the impact large scale development will have on the appearance and ambience of the Historic Georgetown District. While this is an important aspect of the question, it fails to consider long term urban planning issues. To explain the issue we must examine it from a macroscopic urban perspective as well as from a microscopic Georgetown view.

Georgetown, like any number of other established inner city residential neighborhoods, has become the focus of speculative development fever. Although spared from the onslaught of bulldozers, due to the historic district covenant, Georgetown's small scale residential and commercial amenities are rapidly yielding to a combination of geographical, economic and governmental pressures.

A series of development projects built in the late 1960's and early 1970's presaged the end of Georgetown's special status. All are located between the parallel lines of M Street and the Whitehurst Freeway. The Canal Square project is the first of these, a successful conversion of a nineteenth century warehouse into a restaurant, shops and offices. Canal Square is a centerblock project, its bulk screened by older, lower buildings fronting on the street. Next to be built was The Foundry. Unlike Canal Square, The Foundry is an entirely new structure that wraps around the original, small nineteenth century foundry on the site. When built, the great mass and modern detailing of The Foundry was without precedence in Georgetown. It fronts directly on the two streets bordering the site, dwarfing the surrounding structures in the historic district. The Dodge Center is the final step in this architectural progression. This 300,000 square foot structure belittles its namesake, the 150-year-old Dodge Warehouse that clings to one corner of the site. The Dodge Center makes minimal effort to reconcile itself with either the scale

or detail of the surrounding historic district. The nature of this project makes this an impossibility. The Dodge Center is, plain and simple, a large, modern speculative office building.

These structures set the design *parti* for large scale development on the Georgetown waterfront. The waterfront comprises the area south of the C & O Canal, between Key Bridge on the west and Rock Creek park on the east. Once an assemblage of huts and trees sloping back from the Potomac, the Georgetown waterfront is becoming a Chinese Wall of high rise structures built to the maximum density allowed by the zoning envelope, restrained from the Potomac shore by the tight belt of the Whitehurst Freeway.

The new Georgetown is not a neighborhood of townhouse residences and small scale shopping. New structures for speculative office space, interior shopping malls, and luxury hotels and condominiums have propelled Georgetown toward the status of a regional center, whether or not this new status is compatible with the area's historic district designation. For the first time large areas of office space are available to house businesses with a regional clientele and a regional workforce. What is being created is, in effect, a regional office center. The shopping facilities in the structures also reveal a new attitude. The old retail buildings at the axis of Wisconsin and M streets, random and select in nature, are bypassed in favor of the new enclosed malls. Georgetown is being transformed into a regional shopping center far beyond the scale possible had development been contained within traditional retail areas. Luxury hotel and condominium development have followed the same pattern.

Proponents and opponents of development have now squared off over the Georgetown Harbor proposal, the first project to breach the Whitehurst Freeway and reach the Potomac shore. The area south of the Whitehurst Freeway is still largely clear of structures. It represents a final opportunity to halt the erosion of Georgetown's special character and give it a new lease on life. Development here should protect the city as a whole.

The Georgetown Harbor project as currently designed would consume nearly six acres out of a total waterfront area of approximately eighteen acres. The northern edge of the proposed project confronts Georgetown with a multi-storied wall broken at only one point for pedestrian access to the Potomac. The southern edge is built nearly to the riverbank, leaving just enough room for a pedestrian sidewalk. The overall bulk of the project is roughly equivalent to three K Street office buildings. In scale and massing it is comparable to the vast structures of the Federal Triangle. This is the only privately owned parcel of land on the waterfront.

The District government owns the remaining waterfront acreage. The City has voiced pro-park sentiments for the area but to date the most significant action on the part of the Mayor, who is under the vague constraint of developing the land for "public interest uses," has been to enter into a leasing agreement for a 200 car parking lot on the



Post Office Department, Pennsylvania Avenue between 11th and 12th streets, N.W., Washington, D.C. Architect: Delano and Aldrich, 1934. The enormous size and scale of this building's curved facade may be appropriate for the Federal Triangle but should not be duplicated at the harbor in Georgetown.

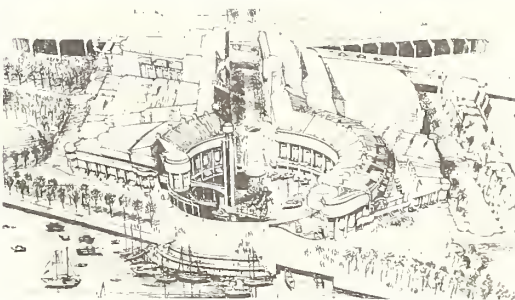
site. The City Council and the Federal government must approve this move. The parking lot is intended to serve a floating restaurant moored at the riverbank. Again, the City, under the Mayor's direction, is opting for commercial development in Georgetown rather than elsewhere and for tax revenue rather than for green space and recreational uses. For years a coalition of Georgetown citizen organizations have opposed further development on the waterfront and have championed the conversion of the entire area into a full scale recreational park.

Opponents of the Georgetown Harbor project view it as both destructive and superfluous. They feel that a decade of intense mixed use development and the subsequent daily influx of a huge transient population have turned Georgetown into a transportation and parking nightmare. Georgetown Harbor, which would be the biggest development yet, could be built in other, more suitable neighborhoods more centrally located to existing employment, retail, and transportation centers. Most of the new projects in Georgetown are hybrids of commercial, residential, and retail, the very types of projects desperately needed in the urban core.

Unfortunately, current redevelopment efforts in Washington's urban core are encouraging office and hotel space. The only housing being constructed in the old commercial downtown is an apartment building in "Chinatown." Great cities traditionally

have residential uses in their downtowns and thus have 24 hour life. When dense development is located incorrectly, it can threaten the city by siphoning vitality and character from competing areas. This is particularly true of the specific types of development that have occurred in Georgetown. It is the right development in the wrong place. Insufficient thought has been given by the Mayor and the City's Office of Planning and Development to this key issue. Has the amount of mixed use space recently built in Georgetown robbed other more needy sections of Washington of the activities such development brings? Not only does the Historic Georgetown District suffer from this excessive development, so too does the rest of the City as it is denied its potential for diversity, intensity, and vitality.

This is a crucial moment in Washington planning history. In five years the decisions will have been made and construction programs will have been set. Georgetown's small scale and unique identity will either be a memory or on the road to recovery. Washington's urban park system will have a green keystone on the Georgetown waterfront or will stop short at the walls of Georgetown Harbor. Washington's old downtown will be in the process of transformation into a residential, retail and office area or will be a zone of transient population and lost opportunity. The options are real. But they will not be available much longer.



Above: Drawing of proposed Georgetown harbor development just south of the Whitehurst Freeway and historic Georgetown. Architect: Arthur Cotton Moore and Associates. Developer: Western Development Corporation of Washington. The contrast with small-scale Georgetown north of the highway is not shown in this drawing.

Below: The Georgetown Historic District still retains small-scale structures from ca. 1800. Side by side: small-scale residential, industrial and commercial.



Shifting Priorities Along Pennsylvania Avenue

Donald Canty

The Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC) has been trying for almost a generation to improve Pennsylvania Avenue, linking the Capitol and (almost) the White House. PADC is probably more energetic now than ever, but so far it hasn't made much difference. The tangible results are a pleasant little park, an anomalous plaza and a couple of office buildings at the kind that are springing up all over Washington without benefit of public action.

A major event is about to happen on the Avenue but it has nothing to do with PADC or with the various Pennsylvania Avenue plans promulgated over the years. The old Post Office building is scheduled to reopen April, 1983 for a mixture of public and private uses.

The robust Romanesque building, a delightful interruption in the huge and pompous Triangle of Federal offices on the Avenue's south side, was threatened with extinction repeatedly over the years. The first Pennsylvania Avenue plan, in fact, proposed demolition of all of the building except its bell tower, which was to stand amidst an extension of the Triangle on the site.

Washington's battle-seasoned preservationists (actively supported by the National Endowment for the Arts) staved off the various threats, and four years ago the General Services Administration conducted a design competition for the building's refurbishing (won by a joint venture of Arthur Cotton Moore Associates, Architects; McGaughey, Marshall & McMillan, Architects and Engineers; Stewart Daniel Hoban Associates, Architects; and Associated Space Design, Inc., Space Planners). A principal achievement of the work has been the opening of the building's eight-story atrium all the way to its newly skylit roof. This great space for years had been truncated by a false ceiling.

Federal offices will look out on the atrium and its lower floors will become "The Pavilion," a mix of shops and restaurants reminiscent of Boston's Faneuil Hall market place and assembled by the same architect, Benjamin Thompson, FAIA.

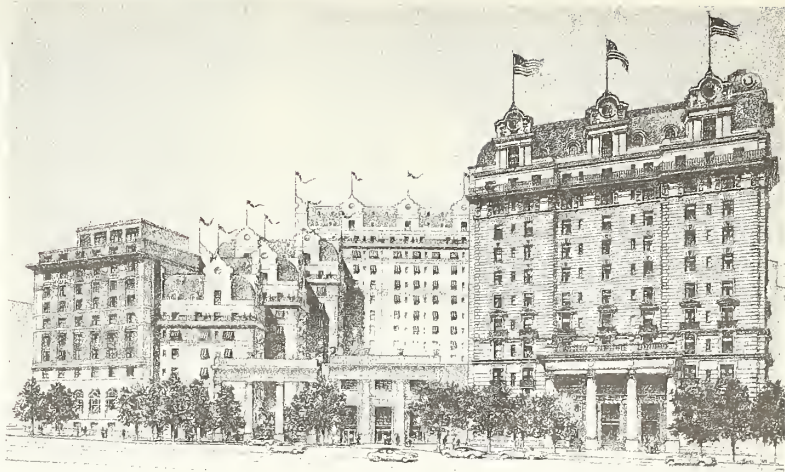
When opened in 1983, the Pavilion should give this part of the Avenue what it has lacked most, life. The Avenue has been the dividing line between the city of Washington and the ceremonial Federal precinct. The Pavilion promises to make the Avenue more linkage than barrier. Thompson also plans a greenhouse opening to the Pavilion from the Mall side, which would make a festive corridor between the Mall and the City's finally renaissance downtown.

The planning of the Avenue began when President John F. Kennedy drove down the Avenue and remarked upon its scruffiness. Then Labor Secretary Arthur Goldberg agreed and, with the aid of a young assistant secretary named Daniel Patrick Moynihan, began planning. The result was the appointment in 1962 of a blue-ribbon Presidential commission on the Avenue headed by Nathaniel Owings, FAIA, founding partner of the internationally known architectural firm, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.

Two years later the commission delivered the first plan. There was general agreement as to the Avenue's two major problems: Its north wall was the irregular edge of the then impoverished downtown, and at its west end the Avenue terminated in anticlimax, blocked from the White House by the Treasury building. For the north side the plan proposed a series of superblocks giving the Avenue a firm edge and extending a checkerboard of linked open spaces into the commercial core. For its western terminus the plan proposed an 800 by 900 foot paved "national square."

Other proposals included widening and terracing the sidewalks and lining them with trees, and arcading the new buildings on the north side. It was a bold plan, but it had its price. In addition to the old Post Office building both the Washington and Willard hotels were to be torn down, despite numerous admirers.

Nothing much happened in the ensuing five years except construction of the monstrous F.B.I. building on the north side of the Avenue, which had little to do with the plan. In 1969 the plan was modified to provide for more private sector involvement



Willard Hotel, 14th and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Architect: Henry Hardenbergh, 1901 (also responsible for the Plaza Hotel, N.Y.C.). Additions to the Willard Hotel by architects Hardy Holzman and Pfeiffer, seen to the left of the original hotel, stepping back from the street.

and the inclusion of some housing. But it remained on paper. There was clearly a need for an instrument of implementation. Hence in 1972 the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC) was created with the power of eminent domain and borrowing authority.

Times and theories were changing, and in 1975 PADC sent Congress its version of the plan, markedly different from the original. It spared the hotels and the Post Office building and also interspersed old buildings along the north edge, rather than making it a solid wall of the new. The national square was replaced by a smaller park and plaza and next to the F.B.I. was to be an ingenious "urban village" designed by Hugh Newell Jacobsen, FAIA. The four-block complex was to have office and retail space at its perimeter. Inside, 1,500 housing units (250 of them subsidized for lower-income families) terraced down to a central court in a manner that reminded some of an Italian hilltown.

Now that implementation of the PADC plan is under way, the problematical north side is beginning to provide a firm edge with pleasing urban variety. From west to east, first will come the two hotels, then three large new office buildings (one incorporating the refurbished National Theater, whose fate also was unsure in the early planning days). Past the F.B.I. building the PADC plan calls for restoring a series of flavorful old buildings. In fact, historic preservation may turn out to be one of the major accomplishments of the Avenue's entire renewal effort, an irony given the initial plan's cavalier attitude toward the past.

If the north edge seems to be shaping up well, the same cannot be said for the Avenue's other major problem area, the west terminus. PADC called for two public spaces at this end: a wooded park at the very western tip across from the Treasury and beyond it to the east a larger paved plaza. PADC called on architects Venturi & Rauch with landscape architect George E. Patton to design the triangular park and landscape architect M. Paul Friedberg with architect James Lindsey to design the plaza.

When Venturi & Rauch and Patton came up with a preliminary design, it was clearly better suited to a plaza than a park. PADC responded with an unusual maneuver: It reversed the roles of the two design teams.

The Venturi team paved the plaza with a replica of the famous L'Enfant plan for Washington. They proposed that marble models of the Capitol and White House sit in their proper places on the plan, and that two 86-foot high pylons rise from the plaza, bearing quotations from the Constitution and other documents in huge blue letters.



Looking down on Western Plaza near the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue. Architects: Venturi and Rauch. Landscape architect: George E. Patton. As completed, 1981, building models and pylons which formed part of the original plan have been deleted, leaving a rather barren space. Photograph: Allen Freeman

After lengthy discussion the models and pylons were rejected by PADC. The plaza is therefore an unadorned expanse of pavement, elevated above street level so that the imprint of the L'Enfant plan upon the pavement is lost to any passerby but birds. Pedestrians can only get to the plaza by traversing several lanes of traffic and there is no parking around its perimeter.

Friedberg and Lindsey's Pershing Park, by contrast, is a welcome spot with greenery and terraced seating surrounding a waterfall, and a cheerful neo-Victorian toad pavilion on one edge.

The most recent controversy over the Avenue involved the plan's housing. Faced with rising land costs and disappearing Fed-

eral subsidies, the PADC staff and consultants concluded that instead of a "hilltown" the housing site should be used for upper-income condominiums, cooperatives and rental apartments, for which there is a demonstrable market.

The Office of Management and Budget is said to be sternly disapproving of the idea of helping lower-income people live on the Avenue and strapped city officials say they would prefer to use their dwindling housing subsidies in poorer neighborhoods. So it seems highly unlikely that there will be subsidized housing built on Pennsylvania Avenue in the near future. But then that's true of almost any avenue in America.

National Building Museum on the Move



Old Pension Building, interior, 5th and G Streets, N.W., Washington, D.C. Architect: General Montgomery Meigs, 1862. Currently being used to house The National Building Museum. Photograph: Walter Smalinger, Jr.

Janet Marie Smith

In 1978 a Joint Resolution of both houses of Congress established the National Museum of the Building Arts to be located in the Pension Building (designed by General Montgomery Meigs in 1862), to be partially funded by the Federal Government (\$500,000 matching funds yearly), and to be responsible for raising its own monies primarily for exhibitions and programming.

Moral support for the Museum abounds; yet even its staunchest backers question the feasibility of operating an institution of such broad scope without stronger government aid. Present economic conditions and recent cutbacks discourage the notion that this financing could become a reality. As Robert Peck, Associate Minority Counsel to the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, says, "This is not the time to come to Congress for Federal money for new programs. Although none of the Smithsonian Museums encompass the art of building, it is difficult for a Congressman or Senator to ask for Federal money now. During the initial stages it seems fair for the government, through the GSA, to renovate the Pension Building for the National Building Museum's use, and for the Museum to provide the basic operational funds. Once it develops and becomes a part of Washington's cultural scene, it may be easier for the Federal government to make more substantial contributions."

The National Building Museum's Board of Directors includes many impressive names and titles. On the surface this seems highly encouraging. They have been an asset to Director Bates Lowry's efforts to make the Museum viable and to establish a foundation for attracting other supporters. Unfortunately, the ranking officers in the building industries seldom know much about fundraising. Repeatedly, it has been suggested by people such as Peter Pearce, President and Director of Research and Development of Synestructics, Inc., Los Angeles, California, that what the Building Museum needs is "a good development officer."

Initial efforts have been fruitful. Because the NBM raised one quarter of a million dollars in 1981, it will be eligible for the \$500,000 matching funds from the Federal government in 1982. It remains to be seen whether or not Congress will meet its commitment to the NBM. Currently, the Museum is functioning on donations, membership fees and grants, many from the Design Arts Program of the NEA. Exhibits, films and newsletters are produced with monies donated by organizations, foundations and individuals on a per project basis.

The first issue of the NBM's publication *Blueprints* was funded by Blake Construction Company, Washington, D.C. The Jacob and Annia France Foundation and Bird & Son, Inc. donated money for the 5-minute promotional film on the NBM. The fountain in the central courtyard of the Pension Building was restored to working condition by the Corps of Engineers, Historical Foundation. Other donations have been made by groups such as The Rouse Company, Tishman

Realty and Construction Company, Inc., and the Grace Foundation. But even with this support, as architect Michael Graves states, "It seems awkward that such a natural cultural element in our society has to struggle."

Although many may doubt that developers, builders and the products manufacturers will contribute to the Museum on a large scale, David M. Childs of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill does not agree. "Maybe we need to explore multiple ways to excite those involved with buildings about the Museum; we need to show them the benefits that would accrue to them by supporting such an institution. The building industry has to become convinced that support for the arts is good for them, as well as for the arts. Sponsoring an exhibition can improve communications and image which can bring a company long-term benefits."

"The museum should make architecture transparent; by that I mean demystify it—describe the technology and process which causes architecture to be created, and all the players involved."

Peter Pearce
President and Director of Research & Development
Synestructics, Inc., Los Angeles, California

With limited financial resources the NBM is concentrating its efforts on developing a viable program before attending to the collection and display of artifacts.

In the works are "Architecture and Diplomacy: American Buildings Abroad" including photographs, drawings and models of American embassies built abroad since 1953. Video tapes will document interviews with architects and users. The "École des Beaux Arts" exhibition will encompass all the prize winning drawings by American architects in the prestigious competitions held by the French school between 1862 and 1930, including the work of John Russell Pope, Raymond Hood and Daniel Burnham. An exhibit depicting 100 years of contributions and working procedures of union members will celebrate the centennial of the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners.

Director Bates Lowry hopes that regional centers will eventually become an extension of the Museum. Rather than collecting documents and relics of historical buildings in one location, the NBM is actively seeking ways to house them in regional facilities. "A building's records, much as the building itself, become less valuable when taken out of context," says Lowry. Perhaps one day the Museum's regional affiliates will sponsor programs to help increase public awareness of valuable buildings on a national scale.

In the meantime, the National Building Museum will not remain idle. Any delay in the renovation of the Pension Building or in the campaign for operating and programmatic funds will not interrupt the institution's development. Lowry says that people often ask if the National Building Museum is "open." His answer is an emphatic "Yes!"

Wolf Von Eckardt: What the District Needs Most

Leslie M. Freudenheim

Wolf Von Eckardt was formerly architecture critic for The Washington Post and is currently design and architecture critic for Time magazine. FDM's Editor asked Von Eckardt, whither Washington?

Freudenheim: Generally speaking how would you characterize the changes you have seen over the last eighteen years you have been writing about Washington?

Von Eckardt: Washington has changed from a sleepy southern town into a lively metropolis—or something approaching it. It has done so without changing L'Enfant's basic plan and that is amazing. The L'Enfant plan is probably the greatest urban design in western civilization. It has been attacked, even by people like Mumford, who said it was just designed for moving traffic and military parades, that the avenues were too wide and the distances too great. Actually, L'Enfant's grandiose vision saved Washington from dowdy congestion. We have probably more open space downtown than any other great city. Despite the highway engineers, we keep the cars moving. And most importantly, the predominance of the Capitol—wisely reinforced by Congress with a height limitation enacted in 1910—has compelled us to keep the city horizontal. That keeps it livable and human and even puts welcome restraints on too much architectural embellishment.

Freudenheim: Is the height limit responsible for a Washington Style? Is there such a thing?

Von Eckardt: Style is perhaps not the right word, but the height limit definitely determines Washington's character and identity. Wherever you go in the United States when you step out of your hotel you don't quite know where you are because all the downtowns look alike; "there's no there there." In Washington, we have a "there." You see the Washington Monument and/or the Capitol wherever you go. The height limit is a wonderful thing: first, for aesthetic reasons, secondly, as a planning device. It forces us to make more rational use of urban space than would a city of towers, even as the center city grows and fills in. L'Enfant designed Washington for 800,000 people, in four-story houses. We now have only 600,000 people and a zoning envelope for buildings up to ten stories. So there is plenty of *lebensraum* without building towers and high-rise slabs.

Freudenheim: Should other cities adopt height limits?

Von Eckardt: Yes. In certain areas. Look at those high rising disasters that ruin Paris and London. I think we have to zone not only for the proverbial glue factories, but also for the preservation of historic continuity, charm, and livability. After all, thousands of people can work thousands of years to make a city beautiful. But it takes one greedy developer only one year and one lousy skyscraper to spoil it all. Have you seen the Hilton in Athens? We must begin to regulate elevations as well as plans. Some cities have height limitations, but a good deal more attention should be paid to design review. Identity and amenity are also good for the city's economy. The skyline is an important part of identity and amenity.

Freudenheim: Today, downtown Washington buildings have their first floors occupied by stores, but the upper stories are empty. Is the District encouraging upper floor occupancy?

Von Eckardt: The Municipal Planning Office and before them the District Commissioners gave lip service to putting people back in the city, but they went about it in silly ways. Even now, they plan to displace perfectly good apartment houses on upper Massachusetts Avenue for a hotel district and commercial development that belong downtown. Hotels should be scattered wherever there is commercial business, near the convention center for example.

Freudenheim: Aren't there enough concerned citizens to argue against that?

Von Eckardt: Yes, there are concerned, vocal citizens groups, but you win some and you lose some. You see, since the riots of 1968 the big hotels want to be in the "safe" and white residential districts. Originally the Mayor wanted to give the hotels permission to expand at the expense of apartment construction. Citizens opposed that. Then the City created this hotel district, again at the expense of residential areas. City planners must be much more courageous and imaginative in support of residential development within center city.

Freudenheim: How could planners encourage more renters and more middle class residential construction?

Von Eckardt: Reaganomics frowns on outright subsidies. But you could give tax benefits: the best route is to zone certain areas for luxury condominiums, others for middle-class and rental housing. You can give developers tax incentives so they don't lose their shirts. Actually it is a tall tale in capitalist

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L'Enfant's plan of Washington, published in 1792. Dark lines denote the canal system tying the two rivers together. L'Enfant selected areas of different shapes, commanding views, for major buildings; he tied distant objects and buildings with principal structures by means of avenues devised not only for travel but for sightlines.



Washington

Von Eckardt

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thinking to say they lose their shirts. Every developer assumes he has the right to unlimited profits. Potential income is counted as income; if you deprive someone of potential income, then you're a thief. This has to be changed. Also the cost-benefit equation has to be changed. Some things that are a benefit to the developer do not benefit the city and its residents.

Freudenheim: But how do you stop this? The city needs developers because it wants tax income, but the developers want tax breaks?

Von Eckardt: Checks and balances. To put that across, Americans must develop a greater appreciation of urban livability and environmental justice. We need popular design education. The Design Arts Program at NEA is a good catalyst for that.

Freudenheim: We have seen major preservation efforts like the *Persimmon and Patent Buildings* succeed in Washington. Is there a lot more to do in the District in this area?

Von Eckardt: There is a lot to do in the field of adaptive-reuse, and in tackling the problem of relating the old to the new. Post-modernism's way of exaggerating the scale of ornament is godawful mannerism. Post-modernism is as bad as the glass box it claims to get us out of. It is just as incompatible with historic architecture because it mocks and insults the integrity of the earlier designs. Post-modernism shows no true understanding of harmonious relationships between old and new.

Freudenheim: Do you approve of the Georgetown renovation going on now?

Von Eckardt: Yes. Waterfront development should be encouraged, not discouraged. We don't need obsolete factories or, even yet, another park along the Potomac. We need attractions that siphon off some of the tourists, suburban teenagers, and shoppers that crowd the old Georgetown streets now. Also, Georgetown merchants are silly not to permit streets to be closed to traffic. Cars don't buy merchandise.

Freudenheim: What do you think of the Master Plan for Capitol Hill?

Von Eckardt: It's a good plan as far as it goes, but I regret that the planning process limits itself to locating future buildings. It does not attempt to plan new, more efficient management and take into account the computer age—the miniaturizing in office procedures and the miniaturizing in communication. That may make it possible to locate more congressional workers in their home states, and reduce rather than expand the number of buildings on the Hill. Commuting and parking problems should be resolved. Where is the mixed use? Why not inter-separate the Capitol offices with housing, bars, restaurants, recreational meeting places for informal meetings, beauty shops, flower shops, bookstores?

Freudenheim: What do you think of the plans for Pennsylvania Avenue?

Von Eckardt: Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation has succeeded in reversing the fascism of the original plan, and it has saved enough buildings to please preservationists and merchants. Venturi's plaza is a disaster and Friedberg's is a misunderstanding: too much landscaping and too little plaza. The danger is that all the new superlatives on the Avenue to include the courts and leave not enough excitement and activity on the Avenue. I fear it might turn into a parade route rather than an esplanade.

Freudenheim: What would improve downtown D.C.?

Von Eckardt: The City doesn't seem to realize that it has a position of strength from which to bargain. There is now abundant pressure for downtown development and redevelopment. That pressure will continue because downtown Washington is not only located between the White House and the Capitol, it is also in the heart of a metropolitan area of three million people who are getting bored out there in the suburbs and who now have a rapid rail system converging on downtown from all sides. There are eight Metro stations downtown, so something is bound to happen there. But if the City doesn't watch out, all the daytime office workers and all the City residents will take the Metro trains to spend their money in Silver Spring and Tysons Corner. A downtown that is deserted at night, except for a few hundred frightened convention-goers, hardly makes for a livable, stimulating capital of the free world.

Current Design Development: Baltimore's Outdoor Concert Pavilion

William Gillitt

A renaissance of the performing arts is in progress in this country. Many cities have an immediate need for new performance spaces but lack the means to provide them quickly or economically. This article details how one city met this challenge.

Baltimore has a long tradition of providing free summer jazz and band concerts in the city center but has had no auditorium for more ambitious shows and performances. The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (BSO) uses the Lyric Theatre as its winter home and has performed at various outdoor locations on summer weekends; but poor acoustics and unreliable weather have meant that these performances were often far from acceptable. The Merriweather Post Pavilion at Columbia is the only weather-protected, outdoor facility near Baltimore.

Last year Mayor William Donald Schafer decided that Baltimore needed a facility which could become the summer home for the BSO and its audience. Finding a site and implementing the idea was entrusted to Mrs. Sandra Hillman, Director of the Baltimore Office of Promotion and Tourism.

The brief was simple: a covered facility for an audience of some 2,000 people with a stage platform big enough for a full symphony orchestra of 100 players. The facility was to be modest, temporary and attractive. Protection from the elements would mean that a firm schedule of performances could be established without fear of cancellations due to bad weather. The proposed location, the extreme end of a pier projecting into the inner harbor, suggested to Sandra Hillman that the facility "could be as dramatic as the Sydney Opera House".

In December 1980, the end of Pier 6, a 1400 ft long, narrow and flat man-made wharf, was a deserted, city-owned parking lot populated mostly by seagulls. Over the years, the edges of the pier had rotted and were considered unsafe for any intensive use. Although the Inner Harbor Master Plan reserves Pier 6 for housing in the future, in the interim, the Pier offered real possibilities for use as a site for a temporary performance center.

As the implications of the idea were examined, it became obvious that in order to maximize the facility's utility it would have to satisfy a multiplicity of uses. Orchestras requiring good acoustics, individual performers with a need to be close to the audience, road shows requiring an orchestra pit, pop and jazz groups with their need for aural and electrical power would all have to be accommodated.

Ticket cost had a significant impact on the facility's long-term use. In order to raise performance quality yet not lose the existing audience, ticket prices had to remain nominal. An increase in audience capacity was proposed as a way of maintaining low ticket cost. This was achieved by supplementing the 2,000 covered seats by an equivalent number which, although outside the pavilion, were still intimately connected to the stage.

Clearly, the original simple brief had changed into a rather complicated problem. In addition, the pavilion was to be ready in five months, by May 1, 1981, for a full summer program. Such an accelerated program meant that time for design development would be minimal. All the myriad detailed decisions, not to mention the initial concept, had virtually to be night the first time. There was little chance for reconsideration.

It was decided to use as a cover a sophisticated, engineered version of a tent, a stressed skin structure, in which the posts and anchors are arranged to impart a stretched double curvature to each fabric panel. Stressing the fabric in this way permits large spans and creates a rigidity in the skin which prevents flutter. The edge posts can also be deployed to produce open, flared, scalloped edges which give a wonderful lightness to a structure covering almost 17,000 square feet. The entire canopy can appear to float over the audience area restrained only by the cables around the perimeter.

The overall concept for the pier, which took into consideration questions of location, orientation, circulation, sight-lines, etc., was developed by my firm, William Gillitt, Architect, Inc., of Boston. For the design of the



Concert Pavilion, Baltimore, Maryland, 1981. Architect: William Gillitt, Boston. Design of the stressed skin structure by Future Tents Ltd., N.Y.C. and Buro Happold in England. Surrounded on three sides by the Inner harbor the sail-like canopy and its masts and rigging complement the nautical environment.

stressed skin structure, we went to the firm of Future Tents Ltd., in New York City, who, in turn, worked with Buro Happold in England who did the detailed engineering studies for the structure.

By the middle of January (1981), planning was proceeding in earnest. A realistic, but very tight and unforgiving schedule, was soon established. The May 1 date was obviously unachievable. However, it was possible to have the tent erected by the middle of June to allow for the installation of the stage, stage grid, lighting bridge, seating, wiring and fittings in time for a grand opening on July 3.

Meanwhile, we were struggling with the difficulties of the site. The Pier, only 200 feet wide, could not be loaded closer than 30 feet from its deteriorated edges. The needs of the auditorium and stage were pushing the size of the canopy to its feasible economic limits, while the need to obtain the correct stresses and curvatures in the fabric were in conflict with ideal seating layouts. The placing and sizing of the foundations became crucial issues. In fact, the dead weight of the structure is not that great, but the pre-stressing applied and the pressures resulting from wind loads (the structure is designed to withstand 80 mph winds with gusts to 110 mph—a small hurricane) can require anchors of up to 28 cubic yards of concrete around its outer edge. However, the soggy condition of the pier, soaked regularly by high tides which raise the water level to within four feet of the pavement, precluded mass concrete foundations and, eventually, long steel beams, inserted like giant tent pegs, were used.

To create a stepped auditorium (the original idea of a flat floor was abandoned as being in conflict with the high quality performance objectives adopted for the facility) earth was imported and retained by timber walls to establish the three main audience areas. The foreshortening effect of the stepped slope creates a sense of intimacy and close contact with the stage even for the "lawn" occupants.

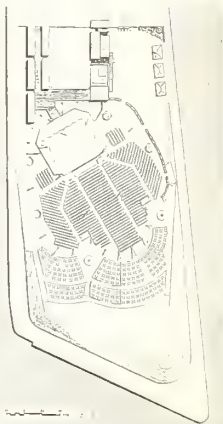
Eventually, the selfless dedication and support provided by everyone involved made the whole project possible. Much of the equipment and many fittings were recycled or were surplus items belonging to the City, an approach which eliminated the cost and long lead times required for new orders. The dressing rooms, public toilets, stage, audience seating and back-stage decking were all leased and installed at the last minute.

Towards the end, the most harrowing delays were due to the weather, which slowed completion of the site work, and the unexpected time it took to assemble the canopy as it lay on the ground. The erection itself was very rapid, taking no more than a few hours. "Tuning" the structure then took

a few more days. Actual work on the site took little more than an incredibly short three months.

At the opening night dress rehearsal one could hear that the shape of the tent canopy, the "clouds" suspended from the stage grid and the electronic amplification system (unavoidable in an outdoor facility) were working together to provide excellent acoustics. In essence, the curved fabric surfaces act as ideal reflectors for the high frequency notes. The low frequency notes tend to escape and have to be reinforced electronically. The large volume of the tent provides the correct resonance. The sound system was so carefully designed and balanced by Maryland Sound Systems that the audiences inside and outside the tent were not aware they are hearing a mixture of direct and amplified sound. The noise of the surrounding city and harbor exists as a background mutter which only becomes a nuisance during the quietest musical passages.

In retrospect, given the right circumstances, which include commitment by the city and community, the right site, clear objectives and approved funding, the erection of similar music pavilions offer a new alternative to other localities which have active summer programs, held either in the open air or in conventional tents, to house their concert performances rapidly and economically in a weather protected and pleasantly informal environment.



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